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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001578

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/13/2016

TAGS: PGOV KDEM CG ELECTIONS

SUBJECT: DRC ELECTIONS: SECOND-ROUND PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN
KICKS OFF AT MIDNIGHT OCTOBER 13

REF: KINSHASA 1521

Classified By: Poloff C. Brown. Reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (U) Campaigning for the DRC's second-round presidential race officially begins at midnight local time October 13. President Joseph Kabila and Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba, the top two finishers among the 32 contenders in the first round on July 30, will have just fifteen days for their campaign. During this period, the two candidates and their respective political parties and alliances will be allowed to post campaign material, run radio and television ads, hold rallies, and campaign throughout the country; no such activities are permitted once the campaign ends at midnight on October 27. The runoff election will be held October 29, and the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) has said the provisional results of the presidential contest will be announced by November 19. Final presidential results are expected by November 30.

¶2. (U) The campaign for provincial assembly candidates began September 28 (reftel) and will also close on October 27. Provisional results from these elections will not be announced by the CEI until December 5.

¶3. (C) The tenor of the presidential campaign is likely to be highly charged and negative. The Bemba camp is reportedly again planning to use the theme of ethnicity, questioning whether Kabila is truly "Congolese." The High Media Authority (HAM), however, has warned that media outlets broadcasting messages based on appeals to ethnic or tribal divisions risk being sanctioned. For its part, the Kabila campaign will attempt to focus attention on Bemba's past as a warlord. Some Kabila supporters have begun a whisper campaign portraying Bemba as a would-be dictator and a "second Mobutu." (Note: Ironically, Kabila has formed an alliance with Nzanga Mobutu, the late ruler's son and head of the Union of Mobutuist Democrats, who finished in fourth place in the first presidential round. End note.)

¶4. (C) Per SRSG Swing at a CIAT meeting the afternoon of October 13, Bemba's MLC has signed a code of conduct for the electoral period, as well as a post-electoral agreement (with some modifications from the original version). As of midday October 13, however, Kabila's representatives had still not signed on to either agreement.

¶5. (C) Bemba has indicated on several occasions that unless he received a helicopter to replace the one destroyed on August 21 during fighting between the Presidential Guard and his security forces, he would be unfairly disadvantaged and might therefore not participate in the elections. At the October 13 CIAT meeting, the SRSG said the U.N. was prepared

to offer both candidates the use of a helicopter and crew for the duration of the campaign. This would effectively eliminate any pretext for Bemba not to take part.

¶6. (C) Comment: Though the campaign is likely to be nasty, it will at least be mercifully short. And while it can not do much to raise the level of political discourse, the CEI appears set to pull off a reasonably smooth second round of elections at the more than 50,000 polling stations where the Congolese will cast their votes on October 29. End comment.
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